Canadian Quality and Patient Safety Framework Evaluation

Executive Summary

Healthcare Excellence Canada

HSO

Overview

Everyone in Canada deserves safe, high-quality healthcare where and when they need it. But in reality, and for a variety of reasons (for instance, age, gender, and race/ethnicity), not everyone in Canada gets access to this fundamental right to safe care. As a country with many complex healthcare systems, there is also variation between how people across the country in different regions experience their healthcare. These considerations prompted the Canadian Patient Safety Institute (now Healthcare Excellence Canada) and Health Standards Organization (HSO) to ask: "how can we focus and align quality and safety improvement throughout the country, regardless of jurisdiction?"

The Canadian Quality and Patient Safety Framework for Health Services (CQPS) is the first of its kind in Canada and spearheads a coordinated effort to align stakeholders and providers in how they work to provide safe, high-quality care. The collaborative effort from the National CQPS Advisory Committee included input from various key stakeholders (such as health leaders, policymakers, health teams including patients and their families/caregivers), to inform the draft Framework which was then finalized following two rounds of pan-Canadian consultation. This ensured the Framework reflected both ongoing and emerging trends in healthcare, regardless of jurisdiction.

Launched in October 2020, The CQPS Framework aimed to focus action and resources to improve the quality of patient experience and outcomes. The goal was also to reduce care variation by orienting key stakeholders — including the public, health practitioner teams, patients and their families, health leaders, Boards, and policymakers— to five goals:

1. People-Centred Care

2. Safe Care

3. Accessible Care

4. Appropriate Care

5. Integrated Care

What we heard

Following the implementation phase, HSO and HEC facilitated an impact evaluation that included consultation with project teams from HSO and HEC. Conducted by an independent consultant from April to December 2021, the evaluation assessed these three overarching questions:

1. How well the Framework's strategies were disseminated

2. Short-term impacts of increased awareness

3. Early indications of quality and safety practice changes as a result of using the Framework

A varied and mixed methods data collection approach was used, including an online survey, case studies, one leading practice submission and digital analysis of usability. The evaluation focused on answering the above three overarching questions.

What we learned

The Framework was accessed through multiple digital channels and from geographically diverse end-users, and it was downloaded over 4000 times nationally and over 700 times internationally. The overall feedback described the Framework as well-organized, easy to use and clearly laid out. These findings suggest that communication about the Framework reached the intended targets.

The findings showed that access to the Framework raised awareness of the importance of both health service quality and safety, as well as the importance of having clear methods for improvements. Survey respondents showed high agreement that the Framework succeeded in increasing their knowledge of the goals and interventions towards quality and patient safety improvement, as well as providing helpful resources to support respondents in making improvements in their settings. Other benefits mentioned included the Framework's ability to prove conceptual clarity, facilitate communication within and between providers, and as a way to increase knowledge on how to better measure quality and patient safety in their own organizations.

Use of the Framework was shown to have supported providers across Canada to improve health quality and safety practices. Survey responses and data from the case studies indicated that users were working to determine how the Framework aligns with local priorities, with existing quality and patient safety guidelines/standards, and to help address any gaps that exist in the Framework's implementation. Efforts to this end included developing policy and operational documents that align with the Framework goals and working to situate the Framework as a guide toward building service-related tools.

The survey and case study findings provided recommendations on how to further advance the implementation of the Framework. This included expanding the dissemination of the Framework by holding discussions with health education programs and local and provincial health teams, and helping establish the Framework as a guiding document. Additional recommendations included clarifying the Framework's aims as well as further dissemination of the evaluation and case study findings, using social media messaging to focus on how the Framework can be used, using clear language across various providers and settings, and encouraging funding and stakeholder agencies to include the Framework alignment as a requirement for advancing quality and patient safety.

Barriers to using the Framework were also identified. Recommendations to overcome them included targeting messaging to show alignment to existing frameworks and/or accreditation requirements, and highlighting the benefits that came through the evaluation of the Framework. Further recommendations were to develop summaries of the Framework and its application (one-two pages) that are tailored by stakeholder types. It was also suggested to develop a community practice-type mechanism to help providers share their learnings of the Framework's use. It needs to be noted that the evaluation of the Framework was conducted as the COVID-19 pandemic was heavily impacting the national health system. This may have limited the ability of some stakeholder groups to provide feedback and input on the Framework.

Read case studies to learn how organizations have been using the framework to improve patient safety in their organizations.

Find out more about the CQPS framework (Why does Canada need a National Quality and Patient Safety Framework for Health Services? (patientsafetyinstitute.ca)